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Huron River cleanup continues

Nonpoint pollution is biggest problem today

By ANNA DOLGOV
Courier Special Writer

The 1970s idea of water pollution was discharge pipes pouring dangerous-looking stuff into greenish-brown streams surrounded by wilted vegetation.

In the 1990s, with the pipes shut down or cleaned up, a more insidious type of water pollution has come into the limelight.

The Huron River is among those that became much cleaner after the Clean Water Act curbed industrial pollution in Oct. 1972 by setting tight limits on the types and concentrations of chemicals that factories may pour in the water. But people started noticing that it was still far from being clear.

Pollutants seemed to be coming from somewhere else. It turned out, they were coming from *everywhere* else.

Remember all the trash you see in the streets, that seems to disappear with the first rain as it is carried by the water down into the guts of the sewer? It goes directly to the river, because the sewer is, in fact, nothing but a nonstop transmission system delivering dirt and oil from the streets into the Huron and its tributary creeks.

Sediment and fertilizers from farms, road salt, gasoline leaks and scores of contaminants you can't even see also join in.

"When it rains, everything on the land ends up in the water," said Janice Bobrin, Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner.

This type of pollution, called "nonpoint" pollution by experts, is the source of 70 percent of all contaminants that reach the rivers, according to the national estimates.

And it's mostly an urban problem. Although farms leave a lot of fertilizer and loose soil exposed to the rainwater, most of the water soaks into the ground and is filtered clean of chemicals before it reaches the river. With urbanization, as the amount of paved surfaces increases, the amount of rainwater "runoff" reaching the river also rises from 10 percent in the rural areas to up to 55 percent.

Stormwater runoff from the cities also has a much higher concentration of contaminants, as it carries oil and antifreeze leaked from cars, heavy chemical particles that settle on the ground from exhaust and industrial pipes, trace metals from paints, brake linings and tires, exposed soil from construction sites and a variety of other pollutants.

The Drain Commissioner's office has been trying to control nonpoint pollution by helping land developers design "natural retention systems": small ponds and wetlands that slow down or hold the rainwater runoff the streets, allowing it to soak into the ground and get filtered before it reaches the river.

This has reduced the amount of metals and sediments reaching the Huron river over the past few years, Bobrin said, but her office is still trying to keep up with what she calls the "tremendous amount of development" in the area.

Huron water may improve further with the Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority's wastewater treatment plant switching its discharge to the Rouge River. The arrangement may benefit the Rouge as well by adding water flow to the river's drained lower branch, said Paul Rentschler of the Watershed Council.

A big frontier in cleaning up the Huron in the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area was conquered between 1987 and 1992, when the drain commissioner's office repaired the leaks of septic sewage into rainwater pipes that discharge in the river. This has significantly lowered the amounts of bacteria reaching the Huron from sanitary sewage, but the overall bacteria counts in the river are still above the guidelines

(See HURON, Page 10)

Business brisk for temp agencies

Assignments are often first step to full time employment

By REBECCA WALDMAN
Courier Staff

Low unemployment numbers statewide and locally mean that a lot of people are busy.

In particular, they translate into a lot more work for temporary agencies, especially in recruiting and building up their pool of available workers.

Not that they mind.

"Things are going well; we're extremely busy because we've got more jobs than people," said Melissa Schneider, account manager at Kelly Services in Pittsfield Township. "The available pool of people has gotten smaller. If you're looking for a job, this is a great time to find it."

Andrea Linn, franchise owner of Adia Personnel Services of Washtenaw and Livingston Counties, agrees.

"Temporary help is the last thing to die, going into a recession," she said. "When the economy turns around, we're the first thing to pick up."

The current labor shortage benefits seekers of both permanent and temporary employment; Schneider said her agency keeps 70 percent of its pool working all the time. Also, two of its newer services, a temporary-to-permanent program and contracts service for managers, engineers and other professionals on a long-term basis, are the company's fastest-growing areas.

Although Schneider wouldn't disclose the number of employees, she did say the company's earnings rose well over 30 percent over last year and hopes to grow another 30 percent this year.

Linn reported similar figures.

"Temporary help is most profitable when unemployment is between 4 and 6 percent," Linn said. "You need both supply and anxiety."

Temp agencies provide other clues to an economy's health.

"When it's all demand (of labor) and no supply, it indicate's the economy's strong," Linn said.

She said the greatest demand is for receptionists, secretaries, entry-level factory workers, technicians with one to five years' experience and other jobs requiring less specialized skills. People are also needed in packaging, electrical assembly, food and laundry services, word processing, bank telling and office managing.

Middle management job opportunities, such as those in banks and stores, are not so strong. Linn said a lot of these displaced employees end up opening their own businesses.

"Franchise businesses are booming in the 90s," she said.

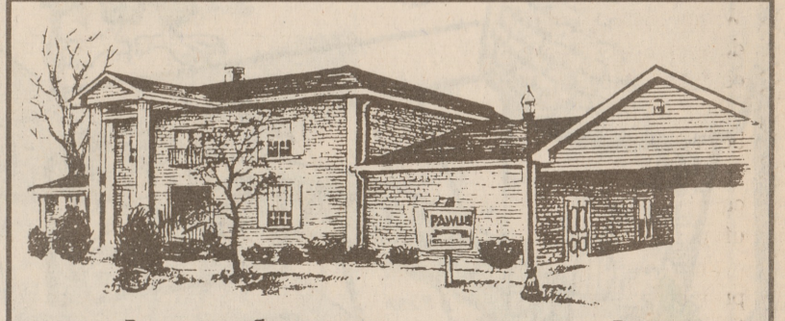
Temp agencies' success is due, in part, to companies that have restructured since the 1980s, by reducing the number of employees and scaling back – or eliminating altogether – their human resources departments.

Agencies like Adia and Kelly absorb a lot of the costs of running advertisements for jobs, attending recruiting shows and maintaining benefits for employees.

"We're thinking that a lot of companies became very busy very quickly," Schneider said. "They're using temps because they're not quite sure how long the economy will stay where it's at. This way, they won't have to go through layoffs and unemployment."

Linn agrees. "For many companies, the only way to get a job is to go work there as a temp," she said. "A lot of companies moved to hir-

(See TEMP, Page 8)



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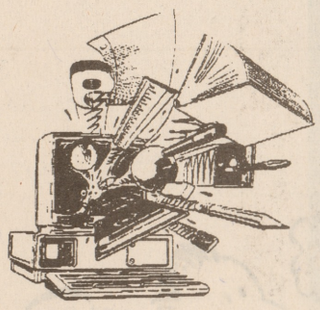

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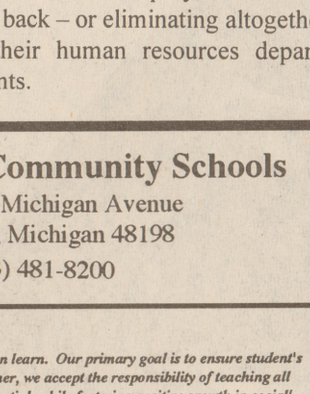

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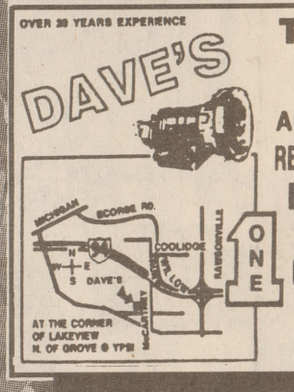

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Tradeport awaits funding approval

By SHAWN LAWRENCE
Courier Staff

Planners of the proposed Willow Run International Tradeport are awaiting approval of $100 million in state funds before they can begin the first stages of development.

In the coming weeks, the state legislature is expected to vote on approving the funds.

Wayne County tradeport planner Joe Joachim has high hopes the legislature will approve the funds, saying, "the governor's office through the jobs commission has told us 'we're ready to go.' "

Capturing $100 million from the state would complete the funding of the $185 million project, which includes an expansion of the main Willow Run Airport runway, and development of the industrial and commerce area around the airport.

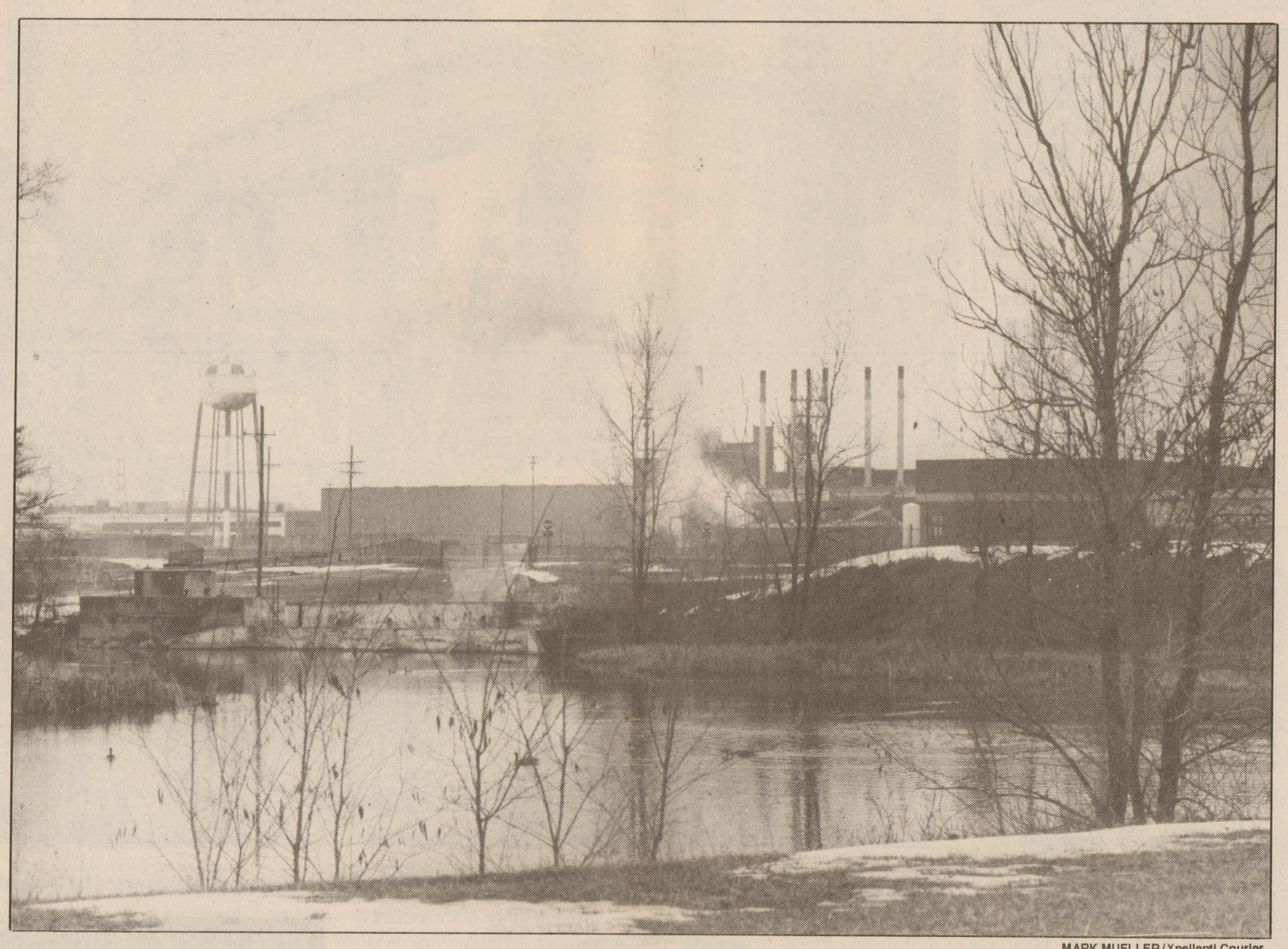
The tradeport, which lies on the border of Washtenaw and Wayne counties, is a joint project by the counties, the first cooperative effort of its kind in Michigan.

The counties have agreed to provide $5 million each in equal funding to start the project, and are ignoring county lines and splitting equally any revenues produced by the tradeport.

Joachim called the agreement, "totally unique; never been done in the state before."

Another $27 million is expected to be raised through new legislation allowing the counties to form a tradeport development authority that would capture half of the new property tax generated by the tradeport for reinvestment.

Joachim said $48 million is available to the tradeport in the form of grants. But for now, the project's fate is in the hands of the state legislators. If the state denies the $100 million in funds, Joachim said, "there won't be a tradeport."



MARK MUELLER/Ypsilanti Courier

Clean up of the Willow Run Creek is important to the success of the Willow Run International Tradeport.

Joachim said about 6 percent of the $185 million total would be used for administrative costs and marketing of the tradeport. The rest is earmarked for the runway expansion, maintaining the airport (which Joachim said has not been refurbished in the last 50 years), demolition and building sewers, roads and taxiways.

If the legislature approves the $100 million, the next step is for the counties to officially approve developing the tradeport authority. Joachim said the process would take about 60 days since both counties' county commissions would need to approve the agreement.

Joachim said tradeport engineers could begin working as soon as six months.

But any plans to make the tradeport a viable option for companies moving in could be delayed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources if the former tenants of the land don't reach some agreement on how to pay for the nearly $70 million tab for cleaning up the pollution that has developed over the last 60 years. The cleanup plan consists of developing an on-site hazardous waste landfill to hold the contaminants presently found in the water.

Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Chrysler Corporation, the University of Michigan, Wayne County and the Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority are hammering out an equation to determine who is responsible for exactly what amount of pollution in the Willow Creek, which bisects the proposed tradeport.

If they are unable to reach an agreement, the DNR will place the area on its national priorities list, conduct a clean-up and bill the parties.

"This does not physically impact the tradeport," said Joachim. "We're not building anything on top of that area, but it does impact the tradeport from a marketing standpoint."

If the tradeport is developed, it will not be the first of its kind. Large scale tradeports already exist in North Carolina, New Hampshire and Fort Worth. Smaller tradeports exist locally in Ohio and Illinois.

Thomas Fegan, the Washtenaw County representative for the tradeport, said the plans for the Willow Run tradeport are currently competitive with the larger tradeports on a national level.

Depending on funds, the size of the tradeport could vary. according to Fegan. If the developers are unable to produce funds for the current tradeport design, Fegan said they could still create a tradeport that would be competitive locally with Ohio and Illinois.

"We'll either be the Midwest tradeport, or the Michigan tradeport. We're envisioning a size on scale with the (larger tradeports) however," said Fegan.

The planners for the tradeport have hired a marketing consultant to study where Willow Run might fit into this relatively new field.

The planners are also conducting a study to determine the impact of the increase in noise pollution the larger airplanes may produce. That study is expected to be completed in June of this year.

"But that airport is primarily a jet airport already," said Fegan. "Big planes come in and out of there all the time."

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New bridge will soon carry traffic

By KAREN DUGAS
Courier Staff

Besides the new Belleville Bridge, Van Buren Township will undergo two other changes to its roads.

The first is re-routing a maximum two miles of Ecorse Road, between Denton and Belleville Roads, to fulfill a new runway length at Willow Run airport. Plans haven't been settled for the scheduling of the project, but it should start by 1996, said Cameron McInally, director of developmental services for Van Buren Towship. Ecorse Road will be rerouted to swing north starting at Denton and swing back down to its original course at Belleville Road. The rerouting will be a half-mile at its widest point, near Van Born Road, and the whole project should cost approximately $4-6 million.

McInally said the area affected is General Motors' property and family home property should not be affected by this. He said the move in the road is so that a runway of Willow Run airport may be extended to 10,000 feet to accomodate 747 cargo aircraft.

By rerouting Ecorse McInally said the Willow Run Tradeport wants to turn the land affected by the airport into a commercial zone to increase jobs and the tax base of Van Buren Township.

"At the same time we don't want to disadvantage the residents in this area," he said. "We think there is a possibility that the road relocation will advantage them."

The second is the widening of Belleville Road from I-94 to Tyler Road. McInally said Belleville Road will be widened to five lanes to remove the curve in the road and to provide smoother traffic and a turn lane.

"It creates a line of sight problem for driveways," McInally said.

The new road will be straight and get rid of the curve almost entirely. North of Tyler Road the road will remain two lanes, McInally said.

Wayne County engineers are ironing out the details of the project while the Van Buren Downtown Development Authority is working on land acquisitions to widen the road, McInally said. Some businesses will lose about 10-50 feet of land at the edge of their property if the DDA is able to buy the land. McInally said no property from family homes will be affected by the widening.

The project is scheduled to begin spring 1996 and be completed by fall of that year provided that the

(See BRIDGE, Page 9)

MARK MUELLER/Ypsilanti Courier

Workmen construct the east side of the Belleville bridge. Completion is expected by November.

MDOT plans Ypsilanti area road improvements

By KAREN DUGAS
Courier Staff

Road construction to Ypsilanti area roads can mean slow traffic and hassle, but it can also mean easier traffic once the contruction is complete. The Michigan Department of Transportation has some plans for the Ypsilanti area's roads this summer, including:

❒ **The straightening out of Ellsworth Road over I-94.** Currently, Ellsworth dead-ends into a bridge on Platt Road, then resumes several hundred feet away. The construction, which would begin this summer and end late summer 1996, would create a brand-new bridge to straighten the "jog" in the road. Bob Daavettila, resident engineer at MDOT, said officials from Washtenaw County have had plans for several years to make Ellsworth into a major east-west route. "This is another phase in that grand plan," Daavettila said. He said traffic should not be interrupted too badly; I-94 may see some brief closings Sunday mornings during late summer.

❒ **Repairs to US-12 from Harris Road to the Wayne/Washtenaw County line.** The 2.7 miles of US-12 that will be affected will undergo major repair to the four bridges and resurfacing to the roadway. The construction is scheduled to start this May and be completed in the fall of 1996. "It's going to be an improvement to that road," Daavettila said. "It'll (be like) a brand new roadway. It will have an impact on the Willow Run and GM plants." The project has not been awarded a contractor yet, but the plan should go according to schedule, he said.

❒ **Adding a left turn lane to the intersection of Ford and Prospect Roads.** The project should begin in April and be completed by July.

❒ **Building a noise barrier for I-94 westbound from Paint Creek to Whittaker Roads.** To keep highway noise low, a noise barrier will be built on about .6 miles of I-94. The barrier will be a block wall about 16-19 feet high in some areas. The project, which also includes landscaping (planting trees and shrubs), will begin this spring and be done by November. The landscaping may continue for a few more seasons.

❒ **Finishing a noise barrier for I-94 from US-12 to Bradley Street.**The project, which includes 3.4 miles of I-94, is in its last stages of landscaping. It should be completed May 10.

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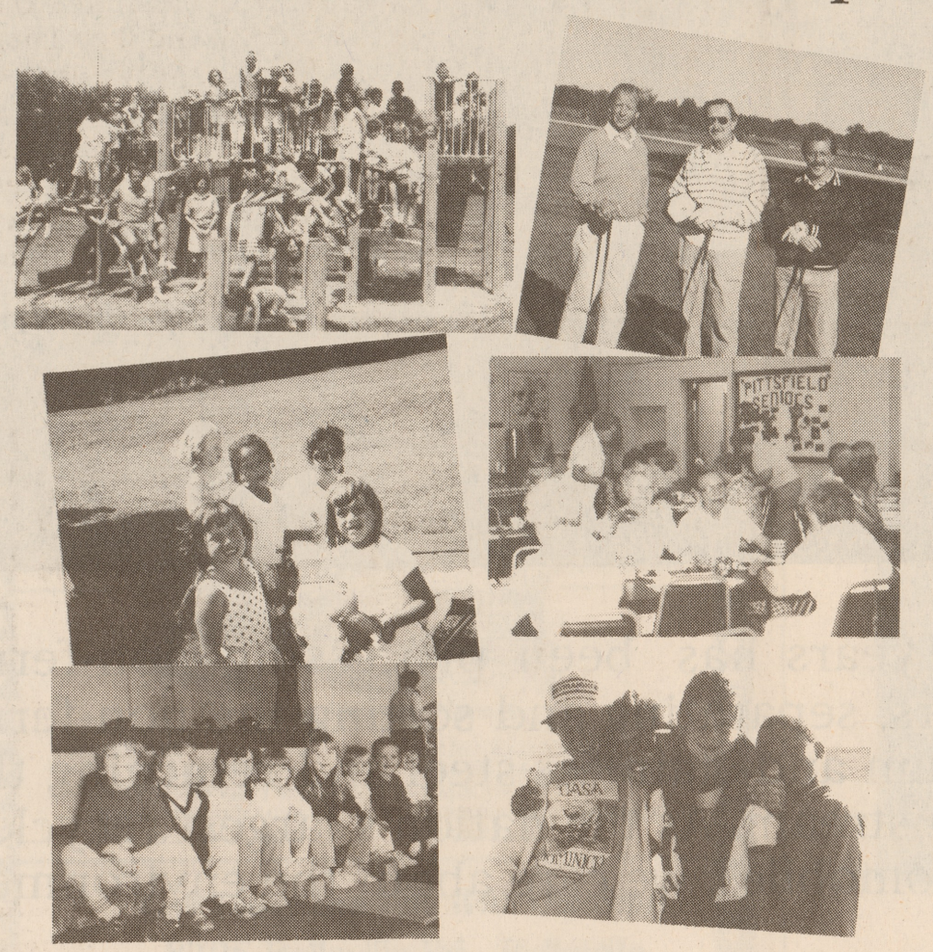
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Downtown storefronts filling up

MARK MUELLER/Ypsilanti Courier

Huron Street has seen a decrease in the number of vacancies in the last two years.

By REBECCA WALDMAN
Courier Staff

With downtown rental rates between $5 and $8 a foot, startup service businesses can find accessible space at a relatively low operating cost.

Downtown Ypsilanti's rental spaces are filling up.

A survey in October by the Downtown Development Authority found a 14 percent vacancy rate of business spaces, down from 21 percent found in a HyettPalma assessment in 1992.

"The majority of that 21 percent was on Huron Street," said DDA intern Terry Harper, who conducted the survey. "Now, that street is almost filled with businesses. North Huron Street has made quite a change."

Harper noted that small successes breed more success.

"Because of the excitement of downtown Ypsilanti and its rebirth with the streetscape project," he said, "a lot of people are interested in relocating here."

The success of some established businesses has been a model for new ones. Harper pointed to Puffer Reds, a record and clothing store on Michigan Ave., as bringing in a lot of foot traffic and as a destination point for customers from out of town.

DDA Assistant Director Devany Donigan said the vacancy rate will decrease even further with the sale of 111, 113 and 115 West Michigan, the old Mac Furniture building. Plans for that building include a mini-mall, with stores selling jewelry and clothing and a possible Native American art gallery.

"That's going to be a good boost to that part of town, new businesses and new traffic," she said.

The hope is that the mini-mall will become a destination business, as have businesses like A. Green Financial Group, which opened on North Washington last year.

Other new stores and organizations taking up residence include the Maria Sabio detective agency, the Green Room coffee shop and the International Workers of the World.

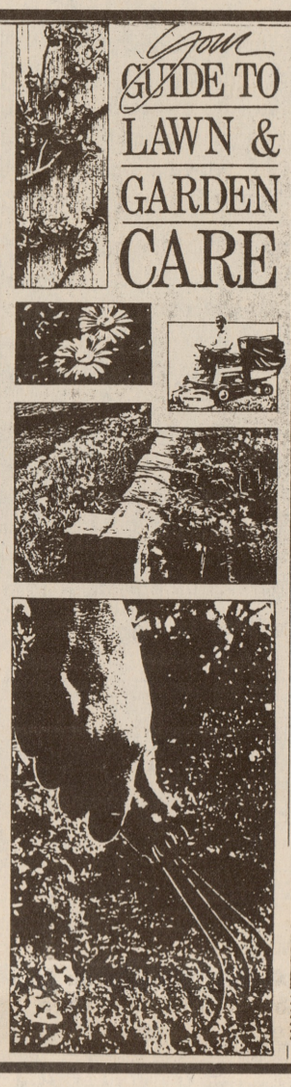
The HyettPalma study noted Ypsilanti's good geographical location, at the crossroads of major highways I-94, I-96, I-75 and US-23, makes it ideal for shopping and a target for growth.

And, with the average rental rates on Michigan Ave. between $5 and $8 a square foot, startup service businesses can find accessible space at relatively low operating costs.

"You can have the best stores in the world, but if you don't have the destination stores, it won't matter," Harper said.

Getting businesses to come to Ypsilanti is half the job, Harper and Donigan said. Keeping them is also important.

"Since I've been here, since September, the turnover rate has been quite low," Harper said.



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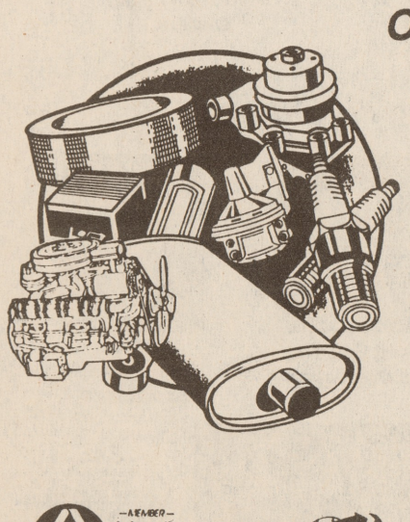

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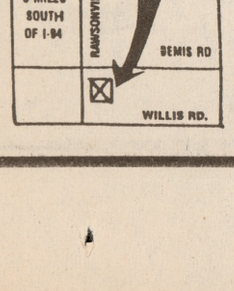

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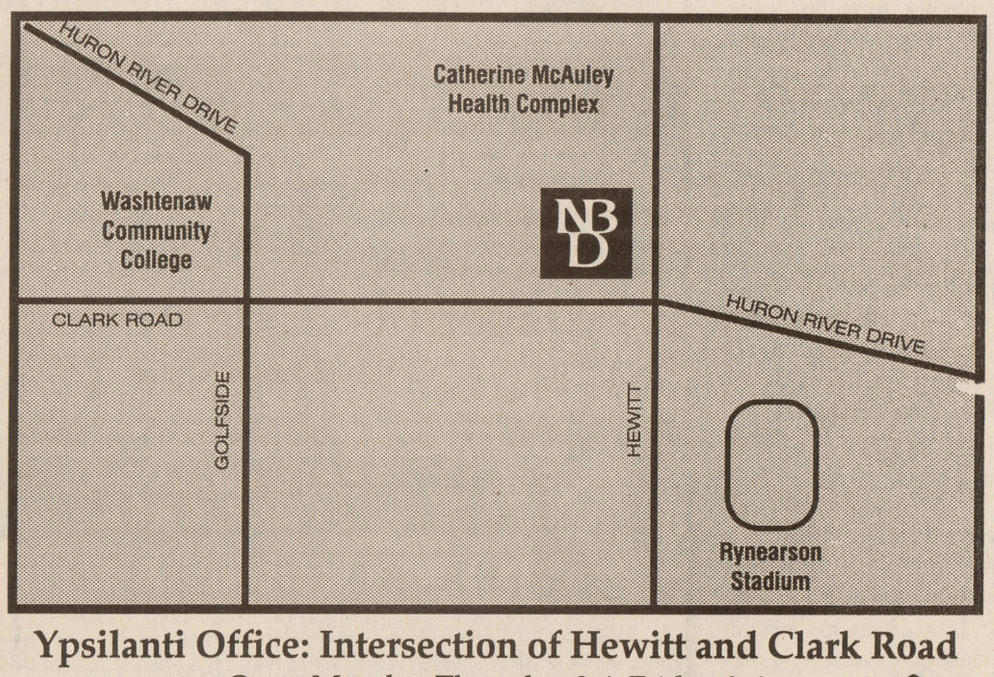

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James River: Long history, bright future

By M. MICHAELLE ZISSLER
Courier Special Writer

James River Corporation in Ypsilanti has a history as colorful as the paper it makes. Employees believe the future is just as bright.

The former Peninsula Paper Company located on the Huron River is Ypsilanti's oldest industry. Founded in 1867, the 128-year-old company is nothing if not a survivor.

The Ypsilanti-Ann Arbor area once supported several mills. Technological changes, paper depressions, industrial upheavals and corporate buy-outs have reduced that number to one.

Administrative assistant Pat Towler isn't surprised. She says the small mill has carved a niche for itself that even larger mills can't duplicate.

"We can make any color from white to black which is unique," said Towler. "Most of the bigger paper companies have a problem making some colors or making a small run rather than several ones. We can do that. We can change quite rapidly from one color to the next."

The normal succession is from a light color to a dark color throughout the day and it takes employees just 19 minutes to make the color switch.

Technical Director Addison Mooken says that's only one of the reasons why the paper mill is not only a survivor but a leader in the industry.

"This is a smaller and older mill but our product line is more diversified than the typical white paper mill," said Mooken. "It's very challenging. We make three or four color changes a day. A white paper mill won't make any changes for days, or even weeks."

Another of Peninsula Paper's unique capabilities is the color laboratory located inside the plant. Many paper mills will contract with a dye manufacturer to create their colors. Mooken says 99 percent of their development work is done at the mill. That's led to some interesting challenges.

"We've had customers send us a piece of fabric or plastic and ask if we can match the color," Mooken said. "It's get exciting in the lab when we finally make the match."

One such customer was Victoria Secret, which wanted a particular shade of magenta. Revlon, the cosmetic company, wanted a deep black for it's Guess for Men cologne boxes. Whirlpool was so specific about its requirements for its annual report that it sent a paper merchant, two designers and the printer to the plant while the paper was being made.

"We make a premium paper and charge a premium price," Mooken said. "When it comes to color control, we are the leader in the industry and our customers know that."

Giving customers exactly want they want meant switching to recycled paper. Mooken said all of the paper has some percentage of recycled content and some is 100 percent recycled.

"It is much more difficult to make the recycled grades, especially the bright whites. Our productivity drops significantly when we make the 100 percent recycled paper," Mooken said.

Why do they do it? Simple, it's what the customer wants, Mooken said.

But the brighter colors and whiter whites means more chemicals. That doesn't concern the technical director. He said the chemicals are neither hazardous or dangerous.

"Most of the chemicals come directly from nature," Mooken said. "And it's better than dumping all that waste paper in the landfills."

Being environmentally conscious is important to the James River Corporation. And, according to Division Environmental Manager Jerry Linzmeyer, it makes good business sense.

"It's a regulatory requirement." said Linzmeyer. "But the costs to our public image could be as potentially expensive as the extremely heavy fines the government can impose for noncompliance."

His responsibilities include responsive planning, waste water discharge control reporting, preventing waste water stream contamination, hazardous material management and training. He and the company take a pro-active approach.

"We discovered a leaking underground gasoline tank in 1990," Linzmeyer said. "An environmental contractor we hired analyzed the soil and ground water and found gasoline contaminants."

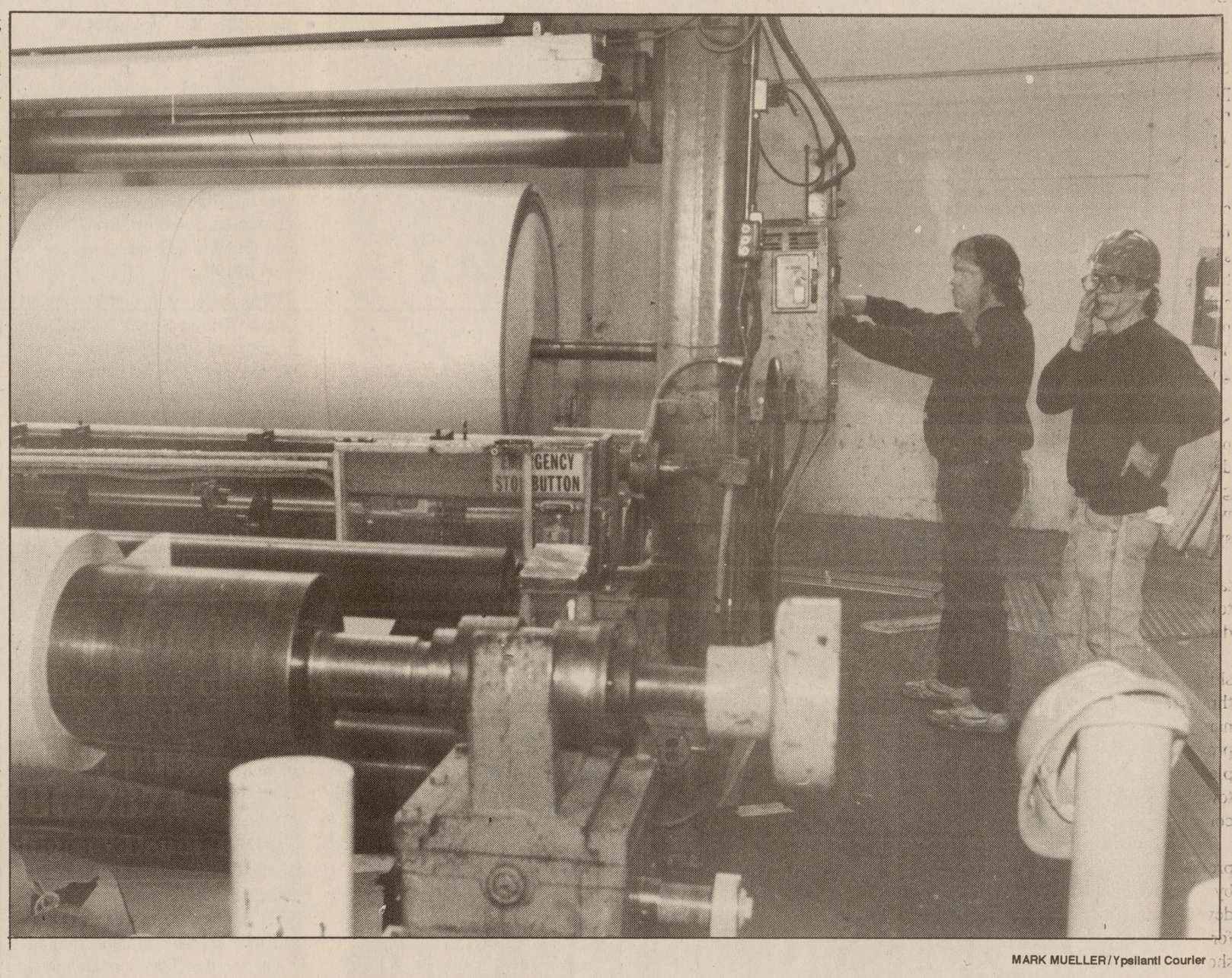
Linzmeyer said the company duly reported the problem to the state Fire Marshall office and the Department of Natural Resources. They entered into a remediation project that is in the final stages this year. "We are ready to wrap up the project and get closure from the DNR," he said.

The remediation project was also "good business sense" according to Linzmeyer. The company qualified for the Michigan Underground Storage Tank Financial Assistance Act. Under that, the owner of an underground tank is responsible for only part of the remediation costs. The state picks up most of the expense.

A paper mill historically has had close ties to the water. Peninsula Paper is no exception. The force of the river used to power the plant. "That was before God made dirt," Linzmeyer said.

Up until 1970, the company generated power from its own power plant across the river. It was discontinued due to intermittent flows in the summer and it now purchases power from Detroit Edison.

(See JAMES, Page 9)



MARK MUELLER/Ypsilanti Courier

James River Corporation has been making paper in Ypsilanti for 128 years. Above, workers roll paper and trim to size. Below, After sheets are cut to size they stack it for final packaging.

Ypsilanti
Area Chamber of Commerce

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Subdivisions sprouting in YT

By SHAWN LAWRENCE
Courier Staff

MARK MUELLER/Ypsilanti Courier

Fred Cartwright works on a new house at Ford Lake Village, one of the increasing number of new housing developments in Ypsilanti Township.

Six residential subdivision developments and five apartment complexes are in the process of being reviewed and approved by the Ypsilanti Township Board of Trustees and the planning commission.

Township Clerk Brenda Stumbo credits the recent growth to several factors: the township board, she said, is interested in growing the township and provides an atmosphere conducive to that end; low property taxes; and finally, Ypsilanti Township is simply a good place to live.

"We have a lot to offer," said Stumbo. "Our services are good, people find that we work with the developers, we have an advantageous location close to the expressway, and four good public school systems to choose from."

Most of the new development is taking place on the south side of the township in the Lincoln Consolidated School District.

New developments in the township must go through a series of three approvals, tentative preliminary, preliminary and final approval. In each of the stages, the plans must be approved by the township board, and by the planning commission.

The following is a list of all the projects currently being considered by the township board. Some of the developments have come to a halt for a variety of reasons, one being a shortage of funds.

Mill Pointe West: the largest of the developments. The 153-unit project is an extension of the Mill Pointe subdivision which will contain more than 600 homes when it is completed.

The subdivision is located on the corner of Whittaker Road and Merritt Road on the southern side of Ypsilanti Township.

Sue Arnold, director of site planning and land development for Mill Pointe, said the houses are selling faster than they can be built.

"There is a high demand to live in a nice rural community, and Ypsilanti is a very pleasant place," said Arnold.

The homes range in price from $84,990 - $107,990, and are located in the Lincoln Consolidated Schools district.

The development has received final approval from the township board.

Partridge Creek: Phase one of the project will include 97 units. The three-phase project will number 300 units when it is completed. The development is located on the east side of Whittaker Road, between Textile and Merritt roads. Tentative preliminary approval is pending review by both the township board and the planning commission.

Windsor Hills subdivision: A 70-lot project located on Textile and Munger roads. Tentative preliminary approval is pending review by the planning commission and the township board.

Pineview Golf Course Estates: A 52-lot development located on the north side of Textile between Stoney Creek and Ellis roads. Final preliminary approval by the township for the development was approved in February 1992, and will expire in February of 1996. Final approval is still pending.

Golfview Estates: Twenty-six lots are proposed on Clubview Drive, between Ellsworth and Packard Roads. Tentative preliminary approval is pending review by the planning commission and the township board.

Esparanza Acres: Nine lots are proposed on the south side of Textile, between Munger and Ellis roads. Tentative preliminary approval is pending review by the township board and the planning commission.

Willow Pointe Club Apartments: A 516-unit complex located on South Huron River Drive, extending south to Whittaker Road. The preliminary multiple site plan is pending review by the planning commission and the township board.

Huron Park Apartments: A 216-unit complex to be located on South Huron River Drive near Schooner Cove recently gained preliminary multiple site plan approval from the township planning commission and the township board.

Greenfields Subdivision: A 204-unit single family detatched development is proposed on Martz Road, east of Tuttle Hill. The preliminary site plan is pending review by the township board and the planning commission.

Georgetown Condominiums: An 88-unit development to be located on Textile at Tuttle Hill. The preliminary multiple site plan is pending review by the planning commission.

Raymond Meadows Condominiums: A 63-lot development proposed on Tuttle Hill Road at Martz Road. Preliminary approval was granted in 1992 by the planning commission and is pending review by the township board.

Housing sales hot in Ypsi Township

By KAREN DUGAS
Courier Staff

Spring means not only flowers, birds and sunshine but also the upswing of the real estate market, especially to the new and used Ypsilanti Township homes for sale, say realtors in the Ypsilanti area.

The homes south of Ford Lake and near the northern township border have been popular housing spots since the mid- to late-1980s, but the market has been slow for the past few months, mainly due to the winter season and higher interest rates, said Kathy Patterson, manager at Ehman & Greenstreet. But spring is starting to look up.

"Sellers don't want winter traffic through their houses," Patterson said, with all the salt and slush.

Maxe Obermeyer, Jr., broker and owner of Lanmark Realty, agreed.

"It's always slower in December, January and February. We have had a lot more activity than we used to in the past couple weeks," Obermeyer said. "Spring is always the best time for looking and selling."

The problem is that while many buyers are eager for more homes to go on sale due to the spring, many sellers aren't taking advantage of this.

"The sellers haven't realized that the warmer weather's attracting buyers; it's usually the best time," said Lisa Bakewell, a broker at Franklin Realty.

Patterson said interest rates had hit a high recently at eight to eight-and-a-half percent, but are taking a downswing.

"Everyone across the board has been affected by interest rates that are up about one percent from this time last year," she said. "People are just waiting to see what happens."

But especially with the indications coming from Alan Greenspan, U. S. Finance, interest rates should be settling back down to lower numbers.

"People who couldn't qualify for home loans now would be able to qualify at lower rates," Patterson said.

A sales report from the Ann Arbor Area Board of Realtors, which also monitors the Ypsilanti area, stated that the average listing price for homes in 1994 was $144,894, up from $139,408 for 1993. The average actual sale price, however, was computed at $139,305 for 1994, up

(See HOUSES, Page 9)

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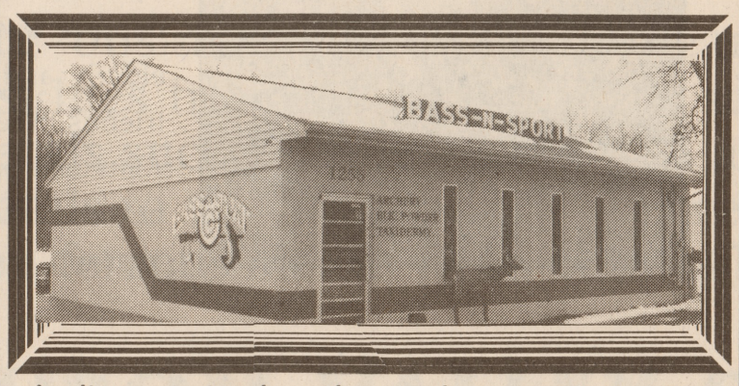

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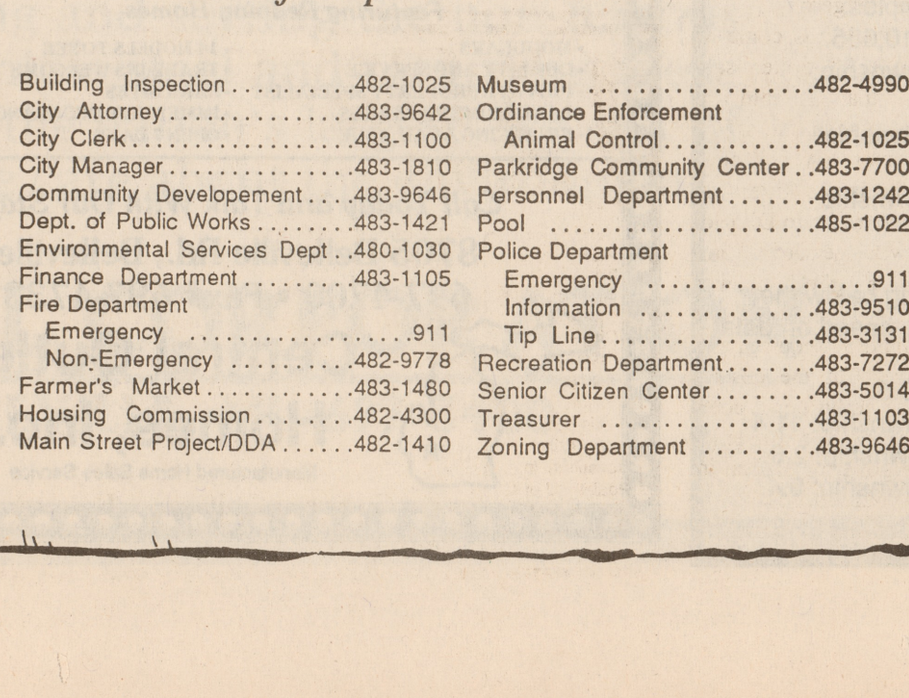

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Low jobless rate may be bad for business

By REBECCA WALDMAN
Courier Staff

Low unemployment is good news and bad news, depending on one's perspective.

On the one hand, it's great for the economy.

On the other hand, some say, it could be bad for business.

First the good news

Michigan's unemployment rate reached a 25-year low in December 1994 at 4.1 percent.

Less than two years after General Motors Corp. closed its Willow Run plant, the Ypsilanti-Ann Arbor area has the lowest unemployment in the state, followed by Lansing and Grand Rapids. The city of Ypsilanti went from a 6.7 percent average unemployment rate in 1993, which saw a peak of 7.9 percent in July that year, to a 5.7 percent average in 1994, having reached its lowest point in December 1994 at 3.6 percent.

"The closing of the Willow Run plant did not have the negative impact on the local economy that was anticipated, essentially because of the rebound of the auto industry," said Chuck Monsma, director of the Institute for Community and Regional Development (ICARD). "Specifically, almost all the workers who lost jobs and still wanted to work were transferred to other GM plants; some were eligible for retirement."

Now the bad news

Near-zero unemployment may scare potential new businesses from settling into the county and the state, said Donna Crudder, executive director of the Washtenaw Education Work Consortium.

"This kind of statistic looks bad for business because there's no available workforce," she said. There may be a huge percentage of people reporting having jobs, she added, "But let's look at the jobs people have to see what their quality of life is."

Crudder's agency works closely with the Washtenaw Development Council (WDC), which strives to attract new businesses into the area. However, standing in the way is a low unemployment rate, which means for some businesses that there's both not enough workers and those that are here may be under-educated for the jobs the businesses have to fill.

"The lower the unemployment is, the less likely new businesses will move in," Crudder said. "We haven't tapped into the potential workforce – high school and college students – because they have no skills."

Part of the problem, she said, is that schools have focused too much on the liberal arts and humanities, and not enough on vocational skills.

"We're still striving for that four-year education of theory, and not for its application," Crudder said. "We're doing a disservice by pushing (students) into the American dream of the 1950s, where they get a four-year degree to become a success."

(See JOBLESS, Page 9)

Top 20 Employers in the Ypsilanti Area

Company	Employees	Type of Business
*Catherine McAuley Health System	4,840	Hospital
General Motors Corp/Power-Train	3,208	Mfg. auto transmissions
Ford Motor Co./Rawsonville Plant	2,300	Mfg. alternators, electrical
Eastern Michigan University	1,781	Public University
Ford Motor Co/Ypsi Parts Plant	1,200	Auto parts & accessories
American International Airways	950	Air freight forwarder
Beyer Hospital	500	Hospital
+GM Service Parts Operations	455	Auto parts warehouse
Motor Wheel Corporation	315	Brake drum & disc brake
Spring Arbor Distributors	300	Wholesale-religious books
Community Mental Health Rehab.	250	Bench assembly, packaging
Willow Run Airport	230	Airport
Mascotech Precision Headed Prdts	170	Bolts, nuts, screws
Engineered Plastic Products, Inc.	156	Injection molding, plastics
Ypsilanti City	140	City government
Econo-Pak	135	Plastic bottles
Marsh Plating Company	120	Plating, polishing
Ypsilanti Charter Township	104	Township government
James River Corporation	103	Fine writing papers/text
Webcraft Games, Inc.	100	Print instant lottery tickets

* Superior Township
+Van Buren Township

Source: Washtenaw Development Council, February, 1995

Temp

Continued from Page 3)

ing first on a temporary basis, to see how reliable the worker is. But in this economy, they're only doing it to take a quick look at the person. They're not trying them for nine months."

The contingent work force – long-term professionals working on a contract basis – is the fastest growing segment of the economy all over the country, Schneider said, and will likely remain so for the decade.

However, permanent positions for management and light industrial work will probably remain flat through 2000. Middle segment technical jobs, like technicians, PC board makers and other kinds of electronics jobs, are booming, Schneider said.

That may determine where a lot of high school graduates will choose to continue their studies.

"We'll need fewer college prep kids and more technical prep," Schneider said.

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Workforce aging in auto industry

By MELISSA CUTLIP
Courier Special Writer

The typical American autoworker is getting pretty gray.

In fact, the average age and seniority level of factory personnel in the nation's auto plants is higher now than at any time in the industry's history, said Sean McAlinden, an automotive industry researcher at the University of Michigan.

Ever since 1993, there have been more retired autoworkers than active ones, with most actives boasting around 25 years seniority and few having less than 20 years at a given plant.

McAlinden points out that due to the tough economic time s and foreign competition that has dogged the industry in the last 20 years, relatively few new people have been hired. For example, he noted, most people currently employed in Ford plants were hired before 1973.

But, he added, like most people, these workers are eager to enjoy their retirement years.

"There will be job openings at these plants that haven't been there for 15 years," McAlinden said.

Current workers are leaving in droves, especially after the year's bonus checks have been issued, he added.

"At Ford and Chrysler, it's gotten to the point where every person who leaves has to be replaced," he said, noting that there are no more laid-off workers to be recalled.

The generous pension benefits accrued by most autoworkers (about $2,200 a month plus medical benefits) are too tempting to pass up for most people, said McAlinden. In addition, retired workers are allowed to make up to $15,000 a year in supplementary income before their pension benefits are affected. This extra income, combined with pension benefits, allows most retires to equal their working income in retirement. Finding post-factory-employment is usually no problem for those leaving the plants, McAlinden said.

"They're skilled tradespeople and can find jobs easily," He said.

All of this bodes well for those seeking employment in the industry. McAlinden estimates that the Big Three will have to replace 200,000 hourly and 60,000 salaried employees in the next nine to 10 years. There are critical shortages in workers trained in digital electronics and specialized machinists. Eventually, he said, they're going to run out of everything.

At first, these new jobs are likely to go to relatives of those already working inside the plant, but even this "brother-in-law" threshold will soon be exceeded, said McAlinden.

To fill these industry vacancies, the Big Three are looking for anew kind of worker, someone w little older with an already established employment history for both blue and white-collar positions.

"They're getting tired of the four-year engineering degrees who are hired in at a high price and often leave early, like the U-M people," McAlinden said, describing the hiring criteria for automotive engineers. "Despite their fancy physics, they often know nothing about how to design a transmission and the cost a ton to train.

"They want someone who will never stop learning and will eventually be able to teach others."

With these demographic shifts pointing to the first large wave of new hires in a decade and a half, the downsizing craze of the early 1990s looks to be coming to a close, McAlinden said.

"In the end, you've got to have people to make money. Like the buffalo, autoworkers are coming back."

Fast facts

Population of Ypsilanti area communities, according to 1990 U.S. Cenuss Bureau figures:
Ypsilanti: 24,846.
Ypsilanti Township: 45,307.
Augusta Township: 4,415.
Superior Township: 8,720.

Per capita income, based on data samples:
Ypsilanti: $10,655.
Ypsilanti Township: $14,977.
Augusta Township: $16,268.
Superior Township: $18,765.

Percent living below the poverty line, based on data samples:
Ypsilanti: 29.5.
Ypsilanti Township: 11.4.
Augusta Township: 2.8.
Superior Township: 9.4.

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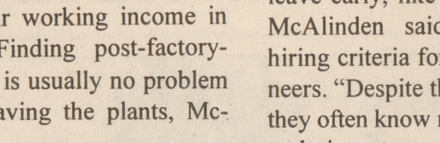

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Jobless

(Continued from Page 8)

Countering that educational philosophy, she said, is the reality that the average community college student is 29 years old, returning to school after about 10 years working.

"What happened in those 10 years? They were probably spent in dead-end jobs," she said.

Instead, schools need to become more aware of what businesses need in their employees and focus on teaching that. Partnerships between schools and businesses should provide mentoring for students, put educators in touch with local businesses and involve the community as a whole more thoroughly, she said.

The name of the game, Crudder noted, is change.

"Businesses have had to respond in order to survive. They've been gathering tools and techniques to create change," she said. "But schools as institutions have been slow to change."

One of the biggest changes should be in how classes are structured, she said. To educate students better, the material needs to be more relevant by teaching with an interdisciplinary approach.

"Why separate science and math?" she said.

That will mean significant restructuring education, which could be a hardship for cash-strapped school districts.

"Less is not always bad," Crudder said. "We have to begin to prioritize."

Houses

(Continued from Page 7)

from $133,520 in 1993. The total dollar amount of home sales was higher in 1994 at $435,637,570, up from $392,659,210 in 1993.

Fewer homes were listed in 1994 than 1993, the report stated. In 1994, 5,374 homes were listed, down from 6,200 in 1993. Homes have also been listed on the market longer according to the report, with an average of 3,109 market days in 1994 up from an average of 2,911 days in 1993.

Local realtors say they recommend buying property in the Ypsilanti area over property in Ann Arbor because you get more for your money.

"In Ypsilanti Township you get a coutry setting but you're close to everything," Patterson said. "There's low taxes and you get more house for your money."

For example, a brick three-bath home with a basement can go for a little over $100,000 in Ypsilanti, while the same home in Ann Arbor would cost much more, she said.

Obermeyer agreed.

"A $100,000 house is quite a nice spot. That's not always true in Ann Arbor," he said.

Bakewell said Ypsilanti is a good spot for real estate.

"There is no other place in Washtenaw County where you can get a house for $40,000-60,000 in good shape," she said. "There's a house for every price range that you want to spend."

And the quieter setting can be an especially strong selling point. "Everybody's always looking for country property," Bakewell said. "There is nothing under the mid-$80,000 for the Lincoln Schools (district)."

Patterson said property in the city of Ypsilanti isn't selling - not because nobody wants it, it's simply all used up - there's no more room to build.

As for what else is available in the area, Bakewell said a lot of people have been buying a lot of higher-end priced homes in the area north of Textile near Stony Creek and south of Textile across from Ford Lake Heights in ranges of $125,000 to $200,000. She said some homes north of the city can go for $200,000-300,000. Patterson said the new housing construction market seems to be very strong, especially in the $140,000-150,000 range. "These people are not first-time buyers," she said.

For those who are first-time buyers, Bakewell says to expect first-time homes in Gault Village to be in the $60,000-90,000 range, and newly constructed first-time homes in Millpointe in the mid- to high-$80,000 range. Patterson said she has seen a shortage of homes in the $80,000-100,000 range.

All three realtors offered tips for first-time buyers and re-interated most of the same points:

❒ Check your credit to be sure it has been accurately reported;

❒ Get with a mortgager or bank and get pre-qualified for a loan. "A lot of people think they know what their range is. It's always good to talk with a lender and have a preapproval so you know what price range you can be looking in," Bakewell said.

❒ Find out about first-time homebuyers programs. Some downpayments can be as low as 3 percent. "There are some very good programs out there for first-time homeowners," Obermeyer said;

❒ Drive through the neighborhoods you are interested in;

❒ Look with an agent for best results. Tell them how much money you have, how much you want to spend, what you're credit rating is and what kind of house you want. "When you provide all that information up front it makes it easier to work with," Obermeyer said.

Above all, keep looking until you're satisfied. Says Patterson: "Your dream house may be just around the corner and you'd never know it."

James

(Continued from Page 6)

The company donated/sold the land the power plant was on to the city of Ypsilanti in the late 1980s. But, the mill retained the water rights for deep water wells on that property.

That water and water from the river is used as noncontact cooling water for the plant.

Linzmeyer has seen the river change a lot over the years. He said he wouldn't be afraid to eat fish from the river now. That's a big transition from two decades ago. The mill discharged wastewater directly into the Huron River until 1970.

"That was common practice then," Linzmeyer said. "You'd go to jail for those practices now." All of the processed waste water along with sanitary sewage now goes to YCUA for treatment.

He said long-time Ypsilanti residents might recall seeing the river turn many shades of red, green or purple all the way to Ford Lake. "I understand we painted a lot of boats back then," Linzmeyer said.

Linzmeyer's territory covers all of the plants in the Curtis Division except for the one in Scotland. He's been with the company for 21 years, joining just four months before it was purchased from the Quirk family.

Did that cause him any feelings of trepidation? "Oh yes," he said. "I didn't know if I'd still have a job," he said as he starts to laugh. Ironically, the firm he left to come to Peninsula Paper closed last year.

Linzmeyer said the purchase was the best move for the company. "This mill could not have survived without the support and capital from James River Corporation."

Bridge

(Continued from Page 4)

DDA can buy the land strips, McInally said. The purchases are being conducted by an outside professional negotiator, he said.

Belleville Bridge

Wayne County officials are optimistic work on the Belleville Bridge will be completed by November, the original estimate for the year-and-a-half project.

"We're still shooting for a November completion for everything, contingent on encountering problems, but we shouldn't have any problems," said George Schneider, Assistant division design engineer for Wayne County's Department of Public Services.

Now, workers are putting in sewer lines. Then, MichCon will install gas lines.

After the gas lines are in, final grading for a new bridge embankment will be done, and the west side of the new bridge should be in place by mid-May.

Then the old bridge will come down, and be sent to the Kent County Road Commission, where it will span the Flat River.

Beams are in place for the new bridge deck. As soon as the weather warms, concrete can be poured, Schneider said.

After the old bridge is down, work will start on the east half. When the project is finished, Belleville Road will be five lanes wide between I-94 and the bridge.

Belleville will have two-lanes of traffice through downtown.

"We have no intention of changing the character of the road in downtown Belleville," Schneider said.

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

	Jan. 1995	Dec. 1994	June 1994	1994 cumulative	1993 cumulative
Ann Arbor city	2.9 %	1.8 %	2.9 %	2.8 %	3.4 %
Ann Arbor Twp.	2 %	1.2 %	1.9 %	1.8 %	2.3 %
Ypsilanti city	7.5 %	3.5 %	5.7 %	5.6 %	6.7 %
Ypsilanti Twp.	4.9 %	3 %	4.8 %	4.7 %	5.6 %
Washtenaw Cnty.	3.5 %	2.1 %	3.4 %	3.3 %	3.4 %
State	6.3 %	4.1 %	5.6 %	5.9 %	7%

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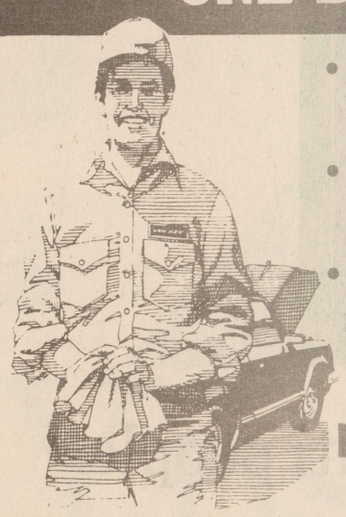

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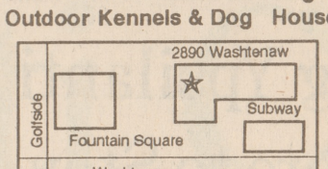

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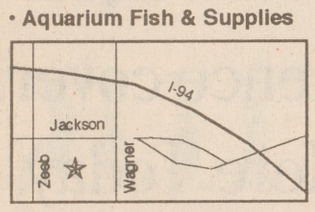

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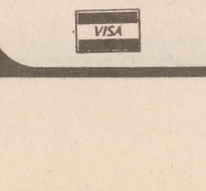

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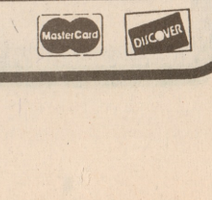

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Huron

(Continued from Page 2)

of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Bobrin said.

But the method of official regulations that worked so well for combatting industrial pollution doesn't seem to do much for reducing nonpoint pollution, which requires a new approach.

"Government officials can't make a difference, it's up to the people who live in the watershed," said Bobrin.

Hundreds of people are already involved in the Washtenaw County "Adopt-A-Stream" program, to monitor water quality of the Huron's tributary creeks, clean up the streams and plant vegetation to combat bank erosion.

"It's really neat. When people get involved they really care," Bobrin said.

With a $300,000 three-year grant from the EPA, expected to come through in April, the drain commissioner's office hopes to boost community action programs and partnerships with local businesses.

The do-it-yourself attitude seems to be sifting into the federal approach to pollution as well.

The EPA launched a battle with nonpoint pollution in 1987 with the amendment of the Clean Water Act requiring communities with over 100,000 residents to obtain National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) permits for stormwater discharge. Although much of the permit contents still focus on the cleanup programs done by local governments, it is the first federal act calling for community effort to fight pollution.

In the Huron basin, Ann Arbor is the only city covered by the regulation. The Ann Arbor Utilities Department submitted a permit application, which took the city two years and almost half a million dollars to prepare, to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in May 1993. The DNR is completing the draft of the permit, said Gary Boersen, unit chief with permits at the DNR surface water quality division.

The permitting process does not require the city to meet any water quality standards to get its application approved. However, when the permit is issued, it will make Ann Arbor accountable to the DNR and will set standards that the city will have to comply with in the future.

Educational programs may be the biggest change in the city's operation under the permit, said Craig Hupy of the Ann Arbor stormwater utility.

"There are (many aspects of pollution) that are not under the city's direct control," added Dave Drullinger, environmental quality analyst with the DNR stormwater unit. The DNR can require the city to limit the use of fertilizers and pesticides, he said, but a big chunk of the problem still comes down to the trash that people throw out in the streets or pour down their drains.

"Property owners should know where the stormwater goes when it leaves (their homes)," said Drullinger. "Everything that reaches the catch basin in the street goes directly to the river. We all live essentially on the river bank. People think they can dump oil (down the drain) because they don't know where it goes."

As part of the application the utilities department also had determine the concentration of pollutants that stormwater carries from the city into the river. Concentrations in the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area exceeded the EPA guidelines for most of the contaminants, including bacteria, oil and grease, phosphorus, cyanide, copper, mercury and zinc.

Although the concentrations may be alarming, they are difficult to control as the pollutants accumulate in tiny amounts from innumerable sources. Metals, such as copper and zinc that rub off car tires all over the street surface, come mostly from road runoff, as do oil and grease.

Hundreds of people are already involved in the Washtenaw County 'Adopt-A-Stream' program, to monitor water quality of the Huron's tributary creeks, clean up the streams and plant vegetation to combat bank erosion.

"What can you do?" says Drullinger, "Tell them not to drive cars any more?"

DNR is still trying to figure out the sources of other pollutants, such as biological oxygen, bacteria and cyanide, said Drullinger. The Stormwater Utilities Department of Ann Arbor will be required to identify and control these sources under the permit, but the progress may be slow.

"It's something that can be controlled over a long period of time, but it's not something that can be controlled overnight," said Drullinger.

A draft of the permit will be sent to the Ann Arbor Utilities Department for review and comment. When the utilities department and the DNR reach agreement, the proposed permit will go on a 30-day public commentary period, so that the city residents can give their comments and suggestions.

The Great Lakes Clean Water Initiative approaches pollution from a different perspective by setting a standard for water quality and then working back to bring individual sources under the benchmark.

The initiative, which was slated to be approved by the EPA on March 13, determines "how clean is clean for the Great Lakes," said Cameron Davis, regional executive with the National Wildlife Federation.

"It's like setting a speed limit on a highway before you get into whether cars or trucks or vans need to pay attention to it," he said.

So far, the initiative only offers measures to make business, or "point-source," discharges comply with the "speed limit."

"It's a very complex situation with nonpoint sources," said Davis. "(We decided) to implement the standards for point sources right now, and then come back to nonpoint sources."

Both Davis and Rentschler agree that although the Clean Water Initiative should clean up Michigan lakes and rivers by curbing the contamination reaching them from more heavily polluted states it is not likely to hit Michigan businesses very hard.

"Michigan is in the best position of all Great Lake states," said Rentschler. "Many requirements are based on what Michigan is already doing right now."

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